

Garden State Preservation Trust

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134 West State Street, PO Box 750
Trenton, NJ 08625

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James E. McGreevey, Governor
William Brooks, Jr., Chair
Judy Jengo, Executive Director

Contact: Judy Jengo

(609) 984-4600

Garden State Preservation Trust Recommends Funding For Farmland Preservation Projects

The Garden State Preservation Trust (GSPT) voted today to approve a funding package totaling \$73.2 million for the purpose of permanently preserving farmland across the State. The package of farmland preservation projects is comprised of projects submitted to the GSPT by the State Agriculture Development Committee. The GSPT's recommendations now move on to the State Legislature for legislative consideration and action, and, once approved, to Governor McGreevey for his review and signature.

In response to the GSPT's recommendations, Governor McGreevey stated:

"This package of projects will ensure that important land for agriculture is protected in many regions of our State. Preserving scenic, productive farmland is an essential investment in New Jersey's quality of life."

Farmland Preservation

Under the farmland preservation approvals made today, \$73.2 million is recommended for farmland preservation projects, including:

- ❑ \$34.6 million will be made available under the County Easement Purchase Program to preserve over 6,000 acres (103 farms). Under this program, the State provides cost-sharing grants to county governments to permanently preserve from development productive farmlands.
- ❑ \$22.9 million for preserving 5,781 acres (58 farms) by the State through direct easement purchase.
- ❑ \$1.725 million is recommended for grants to 3 nonprofit organizations working to preserve approximately 455 acres of farmland.
- ❑ \$13.986 million for fee simple purchase of farmland. Under the Fee Simple Program, the State acquires full ownership of a farm (rather than just the development rights), and subsequently resells the farm with an easement on the property restricting its future development and providing for its permanent preservation. This program allows the SADC to act quickly to purchase outright more farms that are on the market and most vulnerable to development.

GSPT Chairman Brooks noted:

"We are working to preserve the best remaining lands in New Jersey. Today's projects bring us a step closer to the goal of preserving a sustainable base of agriculture in New Jersey so that this industry can thrive for many years to come and so that New Jerseyans will always have the option of obtaining fresh food close to home."

Garden State Preservation Trust—Overall Progress to Date

Background:

The Governor and the State Legislature established the GSPT on June 30, 1999 to oversee the permanent preservation of an additional one million acres of land in New Jersey, as well as the preservation of New Jersey's significant historic resources. The GSPT consists of a 9 member, bipartisan board composed of 4 cabinet officials, 1 public member appointed by the Governor, 2 public members chosen by the Senate President, and 2 public members chosen by the Assembly Speaker. The GSPT reviews and recommends to the Governor and Legislature open space, farmland and historic preservation projects as well as recreational development projects from among those submitted to it by the State Green Acres Program, the State Agriculture Development Committee and the New Jersey Historic Trust. In addition, the GSPT monitors the State's progress in meeting policy goals associated with preservation, including securing lands that protect water quality and quantity, key wildlife habitat, and prime agricultural soils as well as those that provide diverse recreational opportunities. It also makes policy recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on issues related to land and historic preservation and recreation, provides educational information regarding benefits of open space and historic preservation and promotes and leverages State and federal funding to maximize achievement of the goals of the program.

As of July 1, over 260,000 acres of open space and farmland had been preserved toward achieving the statutory goal to preserve an additional million acres of land in the State. The GSPT has also approved approximately \$50 million in recreational development projects, and over \$13 million in historic preservation projects throughout the State.